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Active Learning on Teaching Arabic for Special Purpose in Indonesian Pesantren

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Abstract

Indonesian society gains support from private institution in participating to teaching and learning process as national education system. It tried to implement many approach in conducting process of learning. Furthermore, this research would explore how pesantren in performing active learning during teaching foreign language such Arabic for special purpose. Qualitative approach was employed in conducting research. In-depth interview and participant observation were applied to collect data. One of the options to maintain the educational activities is active learning during language enhancement. Kiyai (teacher) and santri (student) decided to start active learning as the approach. They construct programs and activities in enhancing students' language skill. Furthermore, teacher, instructor and peer-trainer explore opportunities for every individual to have a sufficient training during language week. It shows that there is no program that suits for everyone. Therefore, teacher boards create many programs in pursuing learning outcomes. Furthermore, they observe learning achievement morning to evening, during pray time. The programs were not only realized in the classroom but also in the kitchen, dormitory and other functional room. Finally, this model in religious institutions is a model on creating educational environment as a medium of interaction to accelerate process of learning.

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1. Introduction

Learning is not merely memorizing. For students, in order to truly understand and gain knowledge, they need to solve problems, discover new things for themselves, and always wrestle with ideas. The purpose of education is not only to feed an amount of information into the minds of students but to strive for ways so that vital and useful concepts are deeply rooted into their brains (Chai, Wong, & Teo, 2011).

An important principle in educational psychology states that a teacher not only imparts knowledge to the student. The student should develop the knowledge in their mind. The teacher facilitates this process by utilizing teaching methods that make the information truly meaningful and relevant to the student, thus giving a chance for the student to discover and embed their own ideas, and by inviting the student to be aware of and consciously use their own strategies to learn (Berring, & Heuvel, 2009). The teacher may provide the student with a 'ladder' that can assist the student to a higher level of understanding but the student will also need to 'climb the ladder' themselves (Ermeling, 2012). A revolution is one of educational character. The revolution is attached to approach, strategy and approach. The most often used is constructivist learning theory. The essence of the constructivist theory is the idea that a student should individually discover and transfer complex information when they want to make the information their own (Norton, Aiyegbayo, Harrington, Elander, & Reddy, 2010). The constructivist theory holds that the student is to continuously examine new information that contradict with established rules and revise those rules should it no longer be appropriate (Brew and Jewell, 2012). This view has a deep implication in teaching. Moreover, the theory calls for a more active role from the student in their own learning compared to what is currently practiced by the majority of classes (Chin, & Osborne, 2008). Due to the emphasis given on active students, the constructivist strategy is often mentioned with student centred instruction. In a student centred instruction class, the role of the teacher is to facilitate students to discover facts, concepts or principles for themselves, and not to give a lecture or manage the entire class activities. This article will explore how Arabic teaching in pesantren (boarding school) was implemented through approach of construction learning.

2. Active Learning in Theory and Practice

In formal education process, learning is designed to teach students. There is a need for learning to be activity oriented whereby students depart from any assumptions on education. Firstly, philosophical assumptions on education; education is a conscious effort to develop human toward maturity including intellectual, social and moral maturity (Sánchez, & Morrison-Saunders, 2010). Therefore, the reality of education could be interrelated as human interaction; construction and development of human potential; a life-long occurrence; appropriate with the ability and development level of student; appropriate balance in term of freedom and subject in question and teacher's integrity; and quality improvement of human life (Wekke and Hamid, 2013). Secondly, the assumptions on teacher concluded to; first, the teacher is responsible for student's learning achievements; second, the teacher possess the professional capacity to teach; third, the teacher has a teaching code of ethics; fourth, the teacher plays the role of the source of learning – organizer of learning. Thirdly, the assumptions that students and the subject of learning are; the student is at a developing stage; everyone has different abilities; students are basically active, creative and dynamic individuals in facing their environment; students have the motivation to fulfil their needs (Tanggaard, 2011). Finally, the assumption related to the teaching process could be relate to; the teaching process is planned and performed as a system; learning events occur when students interact with their environment, which is prepared by the teacher; the teaching process will be activated when it happens using correct methods and techniques; teaching emphasize a balance between process and product; and activity contents or teaching process are achieved with optimal student learning activity (Wekke & Lubis, 2008). In addition, these assumptions and aspects, clearly teaching and learning involve a chain of three processes, namely planning, process and output. A teacher plans, processes and evaluates learning (Golightly, 2009). This has yet to show an effort to improve the quality of learning, and so that is the ideal – learning should, first, occur in a planned manner; second, be processed in an organized fashion; third, be measured accurately (evaluated); fourth, include improvement measures if needed. In some practices, the application of management is known as plan, do, check, action called PDCA (Mercer & Sams, 2006). If we were to exploit this, in the education arena especially in teaching, then the teacher is the planner, operator, manager, evaluator and action taker (policy maker) of learning (Humbestone and Stan, 2011). Thus, the task of

teachers is not only teaching but also to design learning so that students can actively become the subject of learning. This research shows that learning does not only involve memorizing a certain amount of facts and information but it is also a mental event and experience process. Every learning event and process demands the involvement of student's intellect and emotion through assimilation and cognitive accommodation to develop knowledge, action, as well as direct experience in a framework that develops skills (motor skills, cognitive skills, social skills and spiritual skills), appreciate and internalize them in the form of behaviour and action (Lubis, Embi, Yunus, Wekke, & Nordin, 2009). Fitting the purpose of education that is to form a good morals and behaviour, not only cognitive aspect needs to be evaluated but also behaviour and actions.

3. Learning through Discovery in Class

Teachers, who believe in the teachings of Schneider (2013), specifically putting students as independent, should urge students to be self-sufficient from the beginning of scholastic life. However, how can the teacher help the student to develop self-sufficiency? Possibly the most appropriate answer in learning by discovering is to give freedom to students to pursue their natural interest (Pike, 2008). The teacher should support their students to solve their own problems or solve them in groups, not teach them the answer to the problem. Students will benefit more if they get to 'see' and 'do' something themselves compared to just being told so (McWilliam, 2009). Teachers can help students to understand complex concepts by using pictorial aids and demonstration. Learning should be flexible and explorative or be done through discoveries. If a student seems to be attempting to understand a concept, give them time to solve it themselves before giving an answer. The teacher should also observe students' attitude toward learning. According to Palmer, Holt, & Challis (2011), schools should stimulate children's curiosity, minimize the risk of failure, and react as relevantly as possible for its students. The constructivist method and the student centred method have existed and dominated current thinking in the curriculum of research disciplines. Reciprocal instruction in reading is an example of a good observation on constructivist approach based on question making principles and it is called reciprocal teaching. The approach is mainly planned to help poor achieving students in learning reading comprehension, involving the teacher to work with a small group of students (Revell, & Wainwright, 2009). At the beginning, the teaching will provide examples of question that can be asked by the students during reading but soon after, the students are asked to play the role of the teacher and pose questions and answer them with their peers. Research on reciprocal teaching, in general, has found the strategy to be fruitful in improving poor achieving student's performance (Duschl, Maeng, & Sezen, 2011). Research that compare the constructivist approach and traditional approach in teaching are often complicated and difficult to interpret because constructivist methods are usually intended to produce qualitative learning outcome, which is the opposite of traditional methods. On the other hand, most research on constructivist methods is more descriptive in nature and not comparative (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010). Furthermore, there are several researches that show the positive effects of constructivist approach on various variables of traditional learning outcomes and in mathematics, science, reading, and writing. Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman (2011) explained further in research to find a correlation between the use of constructivist approaches and the improvement of learning outcome at schools in low income areas. With that said however, more in depth research is needed to support the notion that constructivist approaches are indeed effective in improving students' learning outcome. This fact is sufficient to encourage experts and practitioners of education to conduct systematic studies in order to fix or improve the national education system that is, at the moment, left far behind. Internalization efforts and development of religious values among students need to be seriously and continuously worked on through a well-planned programme (Hudon, 2010). In context of education institution, these efforts not only become the responsibilities of teachers but also others, especially the head of school in finding ways to develop conducive school culture by inducting religious culture at the school (Gouws, 2007). One alternative to support the success of religious education, specifically at school, is by developing Islamic Religious Education into various forms of activities, both curricular and co-curricular, and even extracurricular, which are integrated in such a way that it encourages religious culture at school (Lubis & Wekke, 2009). 24 hours residing in the dormitory is controlled to make sure that teaching and learning is running. It is the opportunity for students in attaining skills and manages their time to study in the supported environment.

As for the strategy to create religious culture in schools, according to Smimou & Dahl (2012) theory on culture development, efforts must comprise of three things, namely values embraced, daily practice, and cultural symbols. For the values embraced, values that are agreed upon need to be concluded and developed at school, and only then, commitment and loyalty of the school community to the said values be reached. Stated by Loya, & Cuevas (2010), there three steps in creating culture that commitment, competence and consistency. Agreed values are vertical and horizontal in nature (Doyle & Harvey, 2005). Therefore, the vertical values exist to connect human or the school community with their faith, whereas the horizontal values exist to connect human with the school community and their relationship with the environment. Finally, school environment is the pillar to enlarge language programs.

4. Conclusion

Constructivists are confident that to know is a process, and the student themselves have to personally and actively discover and transform complex information and make it their own. The constructivist approach employs top-down processing. In this process, the student begins with a problem or complex task, and fined the basic knowledge and skill needed to solve the problem or complete the task. The construction approach also emphasizes generative learning, student activity oriented learning, questioning strategy or inquiry, and another meta cognitive skills. This approach is implemented as one of the approach in teaching Arabic language in Indonesian pesantren. Through this approach, the school gain and apply many programs to encourage students in acquiring the language. Discovery learning and scaffolding are construction learning methods that are based on cognitive learning theory. Learning underlines active self-learning students, who are curious and able to solve a problem creatively. Scaffolding requires the assistance of the teacher during critical points in learning. Teachers, instructor, and peer-teacher tried to extend program beyond the classroom. They create environment through dormitories, kitchens, mosque, and many other places to support language program. There are prime times to conduct language learning. They are morning and evening. Other times are based on pray time and meal time. There are seven occasions to maintain the process of language learning. Problem solving skills are taught through a sequence of steps, for example, method analysis, objective and problem description. Creative problem solving requires an incubation period, unhurried consideration, conducive climate, problem analysis, employment of thinking skills, and feedback. Thinking skills are such as classification, divergent thinking, assumption identification, false information identification and question proposal. These thinking skills can be taught by using instrumental enrichment or by creating a thinking culture in the classrooms. Those skills were acquired throughout the program. Its shows those activities were practiced could be a model method to enhance students' skill in Arabic language.

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